April 13, 2015

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Child Nutrition Programs  
Food and Nutrition Service  
Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 66874  
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RE: Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

Dear Sir or Madam:

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule regarding the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP is a key federal nutrition program that helps introduce young children to nutritious choices and provides nutritious meals and snacks for adult participants.

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C., represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies within a $125-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA’s nearly 200 dairy processing members run nearly 600 plant operations, and range from large multinational organizations to single-plant companies. Together these organizations represent more than 85 percent of the milk, cultured products, cheese, ice cream, and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States.

IDFA’s members are proud of the various dairy products that are included in the CACFP meal and snack patterns. In the recent report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory
Committee, dairy was identified as a food group that is being under consumed by almost all Americans.  

**Aligning with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

CACFP meals and snacks are required to align with the official DGAs. While the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) is the last official Dietary Guidelines published, the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) report is also now available. The focus of the 2010 DGAs is promoting healthy eating patterns, rather than setting requirements for specific foods. All of the eating plans identified as examples of those meeting the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines, the DASH diet, Mediterranean diet, and vegetarian diets, include dairy products. This same pattern remained in the 2015 DGAC report. The report endorsed vegetarian, Mediterranean and healthy US diets, which all included dairy. This demonstrates that dairy, along with other important foods and beverages, form the core of healthy diets.

The 2010 DGAs and 2015 DGAC report continued to identify low-fat and fat-free dairy foods as foods to encourage in Americans' diets. Most Americans are not consuming the recommended levels of dairy products. While many preschoolers do consume adequate amounts of dairy, it is vital that programs such as CACFP keep dairy as an important component in order to continue this trend. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) report highlighted children as a population group of particular concern because nutrition during childhood can affect the development of chronic disease later in life. The 2010 DGAs noted the importance of increasing the intake of dairy products in children as they actively develop lifelong eating habits, which should include healthy choices such as low fat and fat free milk and yogurt rather than other, less nutrient-dense options.

As with children, older adults also have a number of unique nutritional considerations. These include adequate intake of calcium, vitamin D, fluids, high quality protein and maintaining high nutrient intake within lower energy needs. Many of these nutritional needs can be met by dairy products. As a whole, dairy foods are sources of calcium, vitamin D and high quality protein. Sources of protein are especially important to help prevent loss.
of muscle mass and sarcopenia in older adults. The high quality protein in dairy can be particularly useful as dairy foods can be easy to consume for individuals that may have difficulty chewing. As nutrient-dense foods, milk, yogurt and cheese can provide a wide range of important nutrients with relatively fewer calories.

Nutrient density is a concept that originated in the 2005 DGAs and has been carried over into the 2010 DGAs and 2015 DGAC report. The importance of building an eating pattern around nutrient-dense foods was highlighted in the speech given by Agriculture Secretary Vilsack at the release of the 2010 DGAs. He encouraged Americans to consider the nutrient density of the calories they consume, saying “not every calorie is the same.”

Dairy foods have excellent nutrient density. Even those options that may contain naturally occurring solid fats, added sugar or sodium, have high nutrient density because of the levels of beneficial nutrients they provide. The overall focus of the program should be how to encourage the use of nutrient dense foods as the basis for the meals and snacks served as part of CACFP.

We believe that nutrient density is an important concept to encourage in CACFP because a single nutrient-dense food choice can provide a variety of nutrients that are essential for health. Focusing CACFP meals and snacks on nutrient-dense foods encourages care providers to include more nutrients in a lower calorie diet. This focus not only aids in the consumption of beneficial nutrients, but also assists in energy balance and weight control.

Although the retail cost of some nutrient-rich foods may be somewhat higher compared to other, less nutritious options, the value of nutrients per dollar is excellent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average retail cost of a gallon of milk was $3.50 in February 2015, representing a total cost of 22 cents per one cup serving to provide 30% DV calcium, 10% DV vitamin A, 25% DV vitamin D, 11% DV of potassium, and many other valuable nutrients.

The 2010 DGAs emphasized calorie balance in order to attain weight maintenance. Calorie balance especially focused on decreasing the calories from added sugars and solid fats. In the 2010 DGAs themselves, an example of a good way of consuming added sugar was when added to nutrient dense foods, such as low fat and fat free dairy, because a small amount of calories from the added sugar can increase the palatability and consumption of dairy foods and the nutrients they provide.

The 2010 DGAs updated the nutrients of concern to just four: calcium, potassium, vitamin D and fiber which have been continued in the 2015 DGAC report. These nutrients are of concern for children as well as adults. Dairy products are a significant source of calcium, potassium and vitamin D, three of the identified nutrients of concern. Milk is the number

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one source of all three of these nutrients in the American diet, while cheese and yogurt provide calcium and some are also good sources of vitamin D.10/

The 2015 DGAC report emphasized the unique nutrient profile of dairy foods and considered the impact of removing all dairy from the diet, and also the results of replacing fluid milk with other beverages. In the modeled situations where dairy or fluid milk was removed from the diet, the intake of a number of essential nutrients was significantly reduced, in many cases failing to meet the recommended levels of intake. Additionally, the 2015 DGAC report pointed out that common substitutes for fluid milk require additional calories to supply the same amount of calcium as provided through milk.

These issues all point to the important nutritional role of dairy foods, such as milk, yogurt and cheese. However, some Americans that have lactose intolerance may incorrectly believe that they cannot consume any dairy products. The predominance of lactose maldigestion is a real concern for many Americans, especially among certain sub-groups of the population.

The 2010 DGAC, along with a National Institute of Health expert committee, urged Americans who think they may be lactose intolerant to get tested before they unnecessarily eliminate dairy foods from their diet.11/ The 2010 DGAC report also recommended low-lactose or lactose-reduced dairy products such as lactose reduced milk, yogurt and cheese, as a way for individuals to avoid lactose, yet still obtain the nutritional benefits of dairy.12/ This advice is doubly important when considering the 2015 DGAC’s findings that a diet without dairy is lower in a variety of essential nutrients and that many other products marketed as dairy substitutes do not have the same nutrient package as milk and in fact, many have higher levels of added sugars and calories than cow’s milk.

Lastly, as pointed out by the 2015 DGAC report “Dairy foods are excellent sources of nutrients of public health concern, including vitamin D, calcium, and potassium. Consumption of dairy foods provides numerous health benefits including lower risk of diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease and obesity.”13/ This may be of particular importance for the aging population participating to the CACFP program, as they may be at risk for or suffering from those diseases.

**Fluid Milk**

IDFA agrees that milk should continue as an important component of CACFP meals and snacks. Milk provides nine essential nutrients, including three of the four nutrients identified as "nutrients of concern" in the 2010 DGAs and 2015 DGAC report– calcium, vitamin D and potassium. Milk is the number one source of these three nutrients of concern for Americans.

In the 2015 DGAC report, modeling showed that replacing milk with other beverages made significant reductions in diet quality. As an example of what occurs when milk is replaced by other beverages, the DGAC indicated that when milk and milk products are removed from sample diets in the USDA Food Patterns, calcium, vitamin A, vitamin D, choline, magnesium, phosphorus, and potassium become deficient.

In order to ensure that all children and adults receive nutritional benefits from the CACFP meals and snacks, we support the proposed requirement that milk substitutes contain amounts of various nutrients equivalent to the amounts present in milk. We note that the 2015 DGAC report indicated many milk substitutes are not nutritionally equivalent to milk and have higher levels of added sugars and more calories than cow's milk.

**Flavored Milk**

Flavored milks provide all of the same nutrients as white milk, but with a flavor that many children and adults prefer. In a position paper from the American Academy of Pediatrics about foods and beverages in schools, the AAP's Council on School Health and Committee on Nutrition declared that "consideration of a beverage such as flavored milk provides a good example of the balance needed to limit added sugars and yet promote nutrient-rich foods." As the AAP paper on school foods highlights, schools that completely eliminated flavored milk found that less milk was consumed, meaning that kids were missing out on the nutrients from milk.

Over the past years, many milk processors have developed lower sugar options that provide the same nutrients and flavor, but with fewer calories and lower sugar content. We believe that flavored milk should be allowed for all participants in CACFP, in order to give care providers the flexibility to serve the type of milk that is more appropriate for the children or adults in their care.

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16 Ibid.

17 Council on School Health and Committee on Nutrition. Snacks, Sweetened Beverages, Added Sugars, and Schools. Pediatrics 2015;135;575; originally published online February 23, 2015

18 Ibid.
Instead of a limit on total sugars for flavored milk, IDFA would support a limit of no more than 150 calories per cup (8 fluid ounces) of flavored milk that is served in CACFP.

Setting a limit on total sugar for flavored milk could be particularly difficult for milks that meet the California standard of identity for market milk. Milk sold in California must meet the state standard, which requires 8.5% milk solids, with the combination of milkfat and milk solids equal to or more than 12%.\textsuperscript{19} This is higher than the 8.25% milk solids nonfat required for milk sold in other states, which follow the standard of identity in the federal Code of Federal Regulations.\textsuperscript{20} In order to meet the California standard, dairy companies add milk solids, such as nonfat dry milk. These additional milk solids include naturally occurring lactose, which therefore increases the total sugar level in milk. If the flavored milk allowed in CACFP were limited by total sugar content, milk sold in California would be unduly burdened by trying to meet this standard.

A study shows that children accept flavored milk that contains 150 or fewer calories just as well as flavored milk with more than 150 calories. The study looked at the actual consumption of milk with school meals, based on plate waste. Comparing schools serving flavored milk with 150 or fewer calories per eight fluid ounces to control schools serving higher calorie milk, the students’ milk consumption was not significantly different.\textsuperscript{21} This demonstrates that flavored milk with 150 or fewer calories is one method for children to continue consuming milk, along with the important nutrients milk provides.

We also believe that lowfat flavored milk that is no more than 150 calories per cup should be allowed in the program. Both lowfat and fat free milk is recommended under the 2010 DGAs and the 2015 DGAC report. Flavored low-fat milk has the same levels of fat and saturated fat as unflavored low-fat milk, while containing some additional calories from sweeteners. Although the modest amount of sugars in flavored milk easily fit into children’s calorie budgets and into the calorie allowances for school meals, we suggest a limit of 150 calories for all school milks in order to help meet the proposed calorie restrictions while ensuring children are consuming enough milk to get the important nutrients that it provides.

A survey of schools and milk companies found that school milk sales had fallen off 5.1 percent, a drop of 23 million gallons, in just the 2012-2013 school year, the first year of the new school meal nutrition standards.\textsuperscript{22} This is twice as much of a reduction as the previous school year. The percentage of reduction is even higher for flavored milk (10.8 percent), which could indicate that children are not pleased with the fat-free versions of flavored milk that are currently the only types of flavored milk available. Although this survey was targeted toward schools and school-age children’s milk consumption, the proposed changes to the CACFP milk requirements would align with the recent changes to

\textsuperscript{19} California Food and Agricultural Code, Section 35784  
\textsuperscript{20} 21 CFR 131.110 Milk  
the school meal programs. It would be unfortunate if the same loss of milk consumption occurred within CACFP as was noted in the school meal programs.

A limit of no more than 150 calories per cup of flavored lowfat and fat free milk would achieve the goal of keeping total calories moderate while providing a beverage that is well-liked as well as aligning with the targets of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation program.

Yogurt

Yogurt is a nutrient-dense food that is a natural source of high quality protein. Most yogurt available in the United States is either low-fat or fat-free varieties. In addition to protein, yogurt is also a good source of calcium, potassium, riboflavin, vitamin B12, and phosphorous. Some yogurts have vitamin D added. Additionally, yogurt is naturally low in lactose as a result of the culturing process. Many individuals who have trouble consuming large amounts of fluid milk, due to lactose intolerance, can often enjoy yogurt comfortably, making this a food that is healthy and appropriate for many children and adults. The nutrient profile and quality of the milk protein present in yogurt makes it an ideal component of the meat and meat alternate group in the meal and snack meal patterns.

In addition to serving as a meat alternate, IDFA supports the proposed change to allow yogurt to substitute for fluid milk one time per day for adults. We agree that this is a helpful change to provide another way of consuming a serving of dairy, which is seriously under consumed by adults. This will be especially helpful for adults who may have trouble digesting lactose in milk, but find yogurt acceptable.

In addition to this allowance for adults, we encourage USDA to allow for yogurt to substitute for fluid milk up to once per day for children. This will provide another option for a serving of dairy for children, that may be in a format that some children may prefer and with less lactose that some children may find easier to digest. While the proposed rule identified concerns about the nutrient profile of yogurt, it is important to note that many yogurts do have vitamin A and D added. While setting standards for the food programs, USDA should focus on the nutrients provided by the product, rather than assessing only what is currently commercially available.

IDFA also urges USDA to allow yogurt for infants between the ages of six months and one year of age. Consumption of yogurt by infants six months and older is supported by the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners23 while the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the introduction of yogurt between the ages of nine and twelve months.24 The Infant Feeding Guide for WIC includes yogurt in a list of protein-rich foods that are appropriate to introduce to children between the ages of 6 and 8 months of

These references attest to the place yogurt has as a first food for infants over the age of 6 months and it should be included in CACFP for these children.

Yogurt is a nutrient dense food for both children and adults, even when there is some sugar added. For many people, added flavors and sweeteners make yogurt more attractive, meaning that they are more likely to consume the calcium, protein, potassium, vitamins A and D and other important nutrients present in each serving of yogurt.

The proposed sugar limit of 30 grams per 6 ounces of yogurt would be appropriate, as long as the limit was adjusted on a per ounce basis to keep equivalent levels of sugar in smaller or larger servings of yogurt. Many commercially available yogurts for both adults and children already meet this level of total sugars, so providers should be able to find a variety of yogurts that meet the needs of the program and the flavor preferences of their participants.

In addition to already meeting this particular level of sugar content, many yogurt companies continue to develop yogurts with lower levels of sugar.

For people that have lactose intolerance, many find that yogurt is a dairy food that they can consume. The 2010 DGAC report did recommend yogurt as a way for individuals to avoid lactose, yet still obtain the nutritional benefits of dairy. Based on the nutrient package that is unique to dairy foods and the loss of nutrients when dairy is not consumed, the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans should encourage yogurt, along with lactose reduced milk and cheese as the first choice for lactose intolerant individuals.

Cheese

Cheese, like fluid milk and yogurt, is a nutrient-dense food, providing a good source of protein, calcium and phosphorous to children. Due to the high quality naturally occurring protein in cheese, it is included as a meat alternate in CACFP, along with the school meals programs. In addition to being a nutritious and healthy snack, cheese is also naturally low in lactose. Cheese is an excellent way of providing the nutrition of dairy foods to students who may not regularly consume fluid milk products because of their lactose content.

One important benefit of cheese that cannot be overlooked, is to help increase consumption of other nutrient-dense foods. A study of children’s consumption of foods in a school cafeteria setting demonstrated that visible cheese served with a food, such as a vegetable, increased consumption of that food. While foods to encourage were increased during the study, the overall caloric intake in the meal was not increased.

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27 Joseph E. Donnelly, EdD; Debra K. Sullivan, PhD, RD, LD; Bryan K. Smith, PhD; et al J Child Nutrition and Management, Vol 34:1, Spring 2010. The Effects of Visible Cheese on the Selection and Consumption of Food Groups to Encourage in Middle School Students.
Cheese should continue as an option within the meat and meat alternate group. It is a versatile food that can be served on its own as either a snack or side, or as part of a main entrée for breakfast, lunch or dinner. It is a source of high-quality dairy protein, while also contributing to dairy intake.

**Meal Patterns**

IDFA supports the proposed voluntary inclusion of a meat or meat alternate for half of the grain requirement as part of CACFP breakfasts. Recent research has shown that intake of high quality protein at each meal, including breakfast, provides numerous health benefits, including optimum muscle synthesis and prevention of sarcopenia in older adults.28 Yogurt and cheese would be useful contributions to breakfasts to raise the protein and overall nutritional quality of the morning meal.

**Best Practices**

For multiple issues in the proposed rule, USDA recommends or asks for input on voluntary Best Practices that would be included in the regulation, although they would not be a mandatory requirement of the program. IDFA does not believe that it is appropriate to place Best Practices in the regulatory language of the Code of Federal Regulations. Placing voluntary information in the CFR could cause confusion, and many providers might believe that since the best practices were in the regulations, that they were mandatory requirements. IDFA is unaware of any precedent for this type of voluntary information being placed within program regulations.

While identifying best practices for CACFP is an excellent goal, these suggestions should be made available in a location other than the Code of Federal Regulations. USDA has excellent resources for child care centers, family child care home and adult care facilities that participate in CACFP. Information on Best Practices would best be made available on the Team Nutrition website, or another similar location.

**Conclusion**

We encourage USDA to incorporate our comments in any changes to the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

- Meals and snacks should focus on nutrient-dense foods and beverages, such as dairy products
- Flavored low fat and fat free milk with less than 150 calories per cup should be allowed
- Yogurt with no more than 30 grams of sugar per 6 ounces of yogurt should be allowed in the program
- Yogurt should be allowed for children 6 months and older

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• Yogurt should be allowed as a substitute for fluid milk no more than once per day for adults and children
• Meat alternates should be allowed as a voluntary part of CACFP breakfasts
• Best practices for CACFP should be made available in a different location than the Code of Federal Regulations

IDFA members are proud of the range of nutritious dairy products they provide for both children and adults. We urge USDA to continue to allow for a wide range of these, including low fat and fat free milk, both flavored and unflavored, yogurt and cheese, in the CACFP program.

Sincerely,

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